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ABSTRACT

This book maintains that educational reform cannot occur in a vacuum. The theme of the book is that the problems faced by education are systemic and deeply embedded in family and social problems. Schools themselves must assume responsibility for change, and change must occur in the ways in which schools relate to outside constituencies. The introduction describes problems with schools--isolation from the community, a fragmented curriculum, and inflexible structure. Chapter 1 presents a historical overview of the problems of education. Chapter 2 describes the social fabric and ideology of education, which is influenced by changes in the family, community infrastructure, attitudes toward education, political climate, and an individualistic ideology. Institutional-level changes, such as economic and demographic trends, and their effects on schools are examined in the third chapter. Chapter 4 explores the ways in which social problems stemming from the social fabric impact the schools. Chapter 5 discusses the interconnectedness among constituencies and their shared responsibility for education. The sixth chapter explores the structure of schools as a systems-dynamic problem, and chapter 7 looks at systems change in relation to schools, students, and communities. Chapters 8 and 9 discuss the value of forming networks; chapter 10 examines school-business linkages. The final chapter identifies key elements of the system that may provide points of leverage for system change: (1) strong communities that support family efforts to raise their children; (2) strong and supportive families that provide proper discipline, appropriate attitudes toward education, and support for children's educational achievement; (3) clear educational goals for individuals, schools and school districts, and the system as a whole; (4) high expectations for children, families, and communities; (5) the recognition that education is a responsibility shared by all; (6) the organization of schools and other institutions into flexible networks; and (7) the provision of adequate resources for system change. Ten figures are included. References accompany each chapter. (Contains 179 references.) (LMI)